LETTER

TO

Mr. LAW,

UPON HIS

Arrival in *Great Britain.*

In vindicacon of him & his Projects in France.

The SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed for *J. Roberts* in *Warwick Lane*, and Sold by the Bookfellers of *London* and *Westminster*.

Novemb. 1721.

Price Three Pence.

G.R. III.

A LETTER TO Mr. *LAW*.

SIR,

IF the Method to acquire Fame is to be the Author of the greateſt and moſt ſurprizing Events, or if thoſe Perſons naturally draw the Eyes and Attention of Mankind upon them, who have felt the utmoſt Viciſſitudes of Fortune, there is not at preſent in any known part of the World ſo eminent a Man as your ſelf. It is yet little more than a Twelve-month ſince you were the greateſt and moſt glorious Subject in *Europe*, beloved and ſupported by a Wiſe and Powerful Prince, courted and careſſed

by all the Nobility of *France*, and almoſt worſhipped and adored by the Common People. You are at preſent forced to fly from the Reſentments of thoſe very People, who have more than once attempted your Life, and after a long Exile are at length come back again to *Great Britain*. If her former unkind Uſage has not altogether effaced thoſe tender Sentiments every great and good Man feels for that Place to which he owed his Birth and Education, You cannot poſſibly be unaffected with the preſent deplorable State of your native Country. You will find our Trade loſt, our Credit ruined, our Money in the Hands of the baſeſt Men among us, and the Innocent and Deluded ſtill groaning under the Oppreſſions of the Wicked and the Inſatiable. You will find, that our Deſtruction was brought upon us by a Set of Wretches, who have committed much higher Crimes than your greateſt Adverſaries ever accuſed you of, without being poſſeſſed of any one of thoſe great and generous Qualities your moſt inveterate Enemies are

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forced to allow you; That theſe contemptible Fellows have ruined us without ſo much as the pretence to any rational Scheme, or one tolerable Deſign for enlarging Trade and Commerce; That the only handle they had Senſe enough to lay hold on to perpetrate their Villany, was that Spirit your Syſtem and Succeſs in *France* had infuſed into People here; ſo that indeed, however diſtant it might be from your Intentions, You may in one Senſe be termed the Author of our Misfortunes. You are not therefore to be ſurprized if the undiſtinguiſhing and unfortunate among us look upon you as the immediate Cauſe of their Calamities and Ruin. Amidſt theſe Prejudices and Paſſions of the Vulgar, a Pen never yet proſtituted to Flattery endeavours to do ſome Juſtice to your extraordinary Talents, and 'tis hoped you will excuſe this Letter wrote with a *Liberty* of which we in this Iſland have ſtill ſome Footſteps remaining, tho' you have met with ſo little of it in Foreign Countries.

Every Man who has Juſt Notions of Credit, Trade, and Money, muſt allow that the firſt Principles on which your great Scheme was founded, are moſt of them undeniable; but it is pretty well known that the *Avarice* of ſome with whom you were forced to comply, and the *Envy* of others who knew the only way to overthrow the whole Structure, was to make it too large for its Foundation, obliged you, if not to *do*, at leaſt to *ſuffer* what was equally againſt both your *Judgment* and *Inclination*. To expect, after this, that you ſhould be anſwerable for all the Conſequences, was as fooliſh and unreaſonable, as if a Merchant ſhould ſue the Shipwright who firſt built and launched his Veſſel, for the Damages ſhe afterwards ſuſtained in being run upon a Rock by unskilful Pilots.

What was the Deſtruction both of the *Miſſiſſippi*, and *South Sea* Stock, was their Riſing to ſuch a monſtrous height; and it is as certain that you foreſaw the Conſequence, and endeavoured to have

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ſtopped the Riſe of the former, as it is notorious that our Set of thoughtleſs and inſatiable Managers did every thing in their Power to encourage that of the latter. This is demonſtrable from one plain matter of fact. The *Miſſiſſippi* Stock was a long while together at above 1800 *Livres per Cent.* and ſold for ſome time at 2050 *Livres per Cent.* Notwithſtanding which, inſtead of encouraging the People to believe it really worth what their Madneſs had mounted it to, you took in but three Subſcriptions at 1000 *Livres per Cent.* and bound your ſelf down to take in no more; that is, in other Words, you never pretended to declare by the Price at which you ſet your higheſt Subſcriptions, that the Stock was really worth half as much as it actually Sold for.

On the contrary, our *South Sea* Stock never actually Sold for 1000 *l. per Cent.* ready Money. Notwithſtanding which, our honeſt and wiſe Directors, to perſuade People they did not know the Va-

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lue of it, took in two vaſt Subſcriptions at 1000 *l. per Cent.* each, and had deſign'd to open a fifth at 1200 *l.*

However therefore the preſent Prejudices and Paſſions of the weak and undiſcerning may confound Men and Things together, without ever giving themſelves the Trouble to make a juſt Compariſon, Poſterity will do you Juſtice, and make a vaſt Difference between your wretched Imitators, and the great Original they endeavoured to copy after.

When ſome future Hiſtorian, with a Genius equal to the Work he undertakes, ſhall in ſome diſtant Age ariſe in *France*, and ſhall give an Account of all the Prodigies that happened in this wonderful *Æra*, which from henceforth will be the moſt remarkable of any in the Annals of his Country; when he ſhall have judiciouſly collected, and coolly examined the ſeveral Accounts tranſmitted to him, it is more than probable he will expreſs himſelf pretty much to the following purpoſe.

FRANCE

FRANCE *was now groaning under the vaſt Debts contracted during the Wars of* Lewis the Great. *The Regent, while he was purſuing with an inflexible Juſtice thoſe Men who had pillaged the Publick, had created himſelf many Enemies; and that unhappy Affair of the* Conſtitution, *which we have before mention'd, had ſown Jealouſies and Diviſions over all the Kingdom. In this Juncture of Affairs, Mr.* Law *firſt appeared at Court, and quickly drew the Attention not only of* France, *but of all* Europe, *on himſelf alone. This Gentleman, deſcended from an ancient Family in* Great Britain, *was obliged to fly from his native Country, where he had been unfortunately ſucceſsful in a Duel. His Talents and Genius, which lay particularly in Figures, gave him a ſuperior and very uncommon Skill in thoſe Games, which, though they depend chiefly on Calculation, are uſed by People of Quality wholly ignorant of it. He had viſited moſt of the Courts in* Europe, *made his Obſervation on their ſeveral*

veral Forms of Government, and in particular every thing relating to the Management of their Finances. His Perſon and Addreſs were graceful and eaſy, his way of thinking ſtrong and nervous, he ſpoke our Tongue perfectly well, and is ſaid to have had a peculiar Happineſs in conveying his own Notions in their full Strength to thoſe with whom he converſed. In an Audience which he obtained of the Regent, he aſſured him, that if France *would exert all that Force Nature had happily furniſhed her with, ſhe might ſtill retrieve her loſt Power and Credit; that the Debts ſhe groaned under might be paid off, and the Revenue put under new Regulations, equally advantagious to the Prince and People. The Duke Regent reliſhed his Propoſals and Reaſons ſo well, that he encouraged him to execute the mighty Plan he had formed, and aſſured him of the Royal Protection and Aſſiſtance.*

The firſt Step Mr. Law *took, was by a voluntary Subſcription of himſelf and his*

his Friends to eſtabliſh a Bank, which received and paid conſiderable Sums for the Government, lent Money at three per Cent, diſcounted Bills, and iſſued a great number of Notes payable at Demand. As theſe Notes were anſwered with the utmoſt Exactneſs, the Publick found them ſo much more convenient than Silver, that they ſoon came to be 4 or 5 per Cent. better than Specie, and the Credit of the Bank roſe ſo faſt, as not only allarmed the Jealouſy of the Dutch, *but made them reſolved to blow it up. To this end having collected a great number of Notes, they made a Demand upon it in one Day of about* Twenty five Millions. *Mr.* Law, *without ſhewing any Marks of Surpriſe, immediately ordered the Payment of this vaſt Sum all in Piſtoles; but when he had done ſo, procured an Arrêt to be iſſued the Day following, by which the Piſtole was reduced from* ſixteen *to* fifteen Livres. *All Men were ſurpriſed to ſee this Plot ſo dextrouſly turned upon the malicious Contrivers of it; and the Deſign that was laid to overthrow the Credit*

dit of the Bank *and its* Director, *gained the higheſt Reputation to both.*

About the ſame Time Mr. Law, *who only intended his Bank for the Foundation of ſomething much greater than it ſelf, declared his Deſign of planting a Colony in* North America; *in that Country, through which the River* Miſſiſſippi *runs, and from whence the Company he then formed took its Name. This vaſt Tract of Land, as is now well known, extends it ſelf from the Bay of* Mexico *quite round the* Engliſh *Plantations, to our Settlement at* Canada.

The State Bills, Loans, and other Publick Paper Securities, for which People had been prevailed, during the late Wars, to part with their Money, were at this Time ſo ſunk in their Credit, that we are aſſured they were from 57 to 65 per Cent. Diſcount; Yet ſcarce had Mr. Law *declared, that he would admit them to be ſubſcribed at Par into the Stock of his new Company, when ſo great was the*

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Reputation he had now gained, and ſo well did his vaſt Deſigns ſuit with the warm and enterpriſing Genius of this Nation, that theſe ſeveral ſorts of Publick Securities, grew in an Inſtant to be twenty, and even thirty per Cent above Par.

The Miſſiſſippi Company, *as it was then called, and under which Name it is even in this Age ſo often mentioned, had pretty early taken upon them the Publick* Coinage *and* Farm of Tobacco: *The* Eaſt-India Company *was ſoon after incorporated with them, and now the Credit of the United Companies daily increaſing under the Direction of the moſt daring Genius that ever appeared in* France, *they took upon them the entire Management of the Royal Revenue. In Conſideration of which they not only raiſed the general Farms four Millions a Year, but, to the Terror and infinite Aſtoniſhment of all our Neighbours, took the whole Debt of the Crown upon themſelves, amounting at that Time to no leſs than* fifteen hundred

dred Millions. *The Stock of the* Miſſiſſippi *Company, inſtead of ſinking under this prodigious Load, ſtill roſe higher and higher every Day; and the Man who animated and conducted this whole Scheme was, with an univerſal Approbation, made Comptroller-General of the Finances. It is agreed by all the Writers of thoſe Days, that amidſt the moſt numerous Levées and greateſt Applauſe that ever attended any Miniſter, he never once appeared either elevated or ſurpriſed, and that tho' he was daily forming ſome new and great Deſign, he diſpatched the ordinary Buſineſs of his Poſt with an inimitable Readineſs. The Management of all the Revenues in* France *was now in his Hands, when, inſtead of exacting the ſeveral Duties with the ſame Severity the Farmers had done before him, he took away the Toll-Bars at the Entrance of* Paris, *and aboliſhed all thoſe heavy Taxes, with which the Poor were chiefly affected; ſuch as the Duties upon Fleſh, Fiſh, Fruit, Wine, and Fuel; In conſequence of which, an infinite number of*

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Collectors and Toll-gatherers were dis-charged as useless. These Actions render'd him extreamly dear to the Common People, who publickly called him the Saviour of France. *He proceeded to form still greater Designs, to set up several new Manufacturies in the Kingdom, and is reported to have had Thoughts of making a new Canal for Ships of Burthen from the* Loyer *to the* Seine; *to have design-ed* Roan *for the chief Magazine of all* France, *and to have built a* new City *on the other side of the* Seine, *over-against the* Old. *His prodigious Reputation, and the Fame of these Things, gave no small Alarm to all our Neighbours, who re-garded the rising Greatness of this King-dom with the utmost Jealousy. It is re-ported, that no less than half a Million of People, including Strangers from the remotest Parts of* Europe, *flocked to* Paris, *to become Adventurers in a Company, which seemed determined to engross the Riches of the World. This raised the Stock to so prodigious an Height, that tho' the Capital was augmented by new*

Subscriptions to three hundred Millions, *it sold at length at* two thousand and fifty *per Cent. so that those who originally subscribed a State Bill of* one hundred Livres, *which they bought for* thirty five *or* forty, *became clear Gainers of above* two thousand Livres. *We should not venture to relate this Fact, which seems so highly incredible* now, *was it not confirmed by all the Historians of that Age, and apparent from several Books of Entries, which are to be seen in our Publick Offices even to this Day. It is affirmed by many, that the* Comptroller-General *was sensible this excessive Rise of the Stock would prove the Destruction of all his Designs, but that he was not suffered by some, who had an Influence at Court, (and who perhaps in secret envied him) to put a timely Check to it. The Event justified his Apprehensions. The first Adventurers began now to think of what they called in those Days* Realizing, *that is, of converting their prodigious Gains into Specie. This brought such a Demand upon the* Bank *as it was*

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impoſſible to anſwer; to ſtop which, the Government was obliged to have recourſe to ſeveral extraordinary Methods: But as Force *and* Credit *are inconſiſtent in their Nature, the Remedy proved worſe than the Diſeaſe, and overthrew at once the whole Structure. The Principles which that great Genius, who firſt erected it, ſeems chiefly to have acted upon, and which it is ſaid he frequently uſed to aſſert in his particular Converſations, were theſe, That* The Power and Wealth of a Nation conſiſted in Numbers of People, *that* The Number of a People depended on Trade, *and that* Trade depended on Money; *that* Credit was equal to Money, ; *that* Tho' among Bankers and Private Traders Credit well managed is worth *Ten* times their Capital-Stock, yet that the Credit of a Royal Bank ſupported by the whole Species of a Kingdom formed into one Great Trading Company, has innumerable Advantages over the former, and may conſequently be extended much farther; *that* Paper might ſupply the place of Silver, and was even

better qualified to be uſed as Money, as it might be made more eaſy for delivery, of the ſame Value in all places, kept or divided without Loſs or Expence, capable of a Stamp, and leſs liable to be counterfeited; *and laſtly, that* France, if ſhe would exert her whole Strength, and make uſe of all the Advantages Providence had beſtowed upon her, might certainly become the moſt powerful Kingdom in the World. *Whether or no there is not ſomething in theſe Maxims more beautiful in* Speculation, *than reducible to* Practice; *or whether it were impoſſible for the moſt extenſive Genius to carry on ſo many great Deſigns at once; or laſtly, whether, as moſt affirm, his Plan was broke in upon and ruined by the Envy and Ignorance of other People, we ſhall not pretend to determine at this Diſtance of Time. One thing is certain, that ſo Specious was his Syſtem, that even after it had failed here, it was ſet up and carried on in* England *and* Holland: *But as the Managers had neither the Strength to conduct*

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nor the Skill to fit and accommodate it to the different Conſtitutions of thoſe Countries, it fell in pieces ſooner there, and proved much more fatal than with us. The Diſſolution of this vaſt Machine put all France *in Confuſion. Thouſands of Families were naturally involved in the Ruin of it; and the People, who always love or hate in extreames made ſeveral Attempts on the very Life of that Man, whom they had a little before adored as the* good Genius of France. *It is agreed by all the Writers of thoſe times, that the* Comptroller-General, *as he had never been elevated with the Applauſe, was now firm and intrepid amidſt the Clamours and Threats of a whole Nation, and that he daily applied himſelf with the utmoſt Diligence to have once again mended and ſet on Foot his vaſt Plan. The Duke Regent, who knew better than any Man what Meaſures the* Comptroller-General *had* adviſed *or* oppoſed, *and who conſequently was the* beſt, *and indeed the* only *Judge of his true Demerits, with a Reſolution worthy the Imitation of all Princes*

ces who would be well ſerved, protected his Miniſter from the Fury of the Populace. He placed a Guard about his Perſon; and when the Tide at laſt ran too violent againſt him to be any longer ſtemmed, gave him proper Paſſes, and permitted him to leave France. *Mr.* Law *retired firſt to* Flanders, *from thence to* Venice, Hamburg *and* Copenhagen, *and laſt of all to his Native Country* Great Britain, *where*

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You alone, Sir, can determine in what manner this future Hiſtorian ſhall conclude a Narration, which Poſterity will never think too long or particular, as it will give them an Account of the moſt ſurpriſing and remarkable Event in all his Hiſtory. It is ſcarce probable, that your extenſive Genius ſhould lye altogether idle and unactive; yet ſhould you offer any thing here, you are to expect it will be oppoſed by *Prejudice* on one hand

hand, and a much more dangerous Enemy on the other, namely, the *Envy* of thoſe, who have paſſed among us, for ſome time, for Men of Buſineſs, meerly from a *ſuperficial* way of *prating* on thoſe Subjects you are ſo truly a Maſter of. It is evident, that under whatever Government you ſhall chuſe to live, you are capable of being a moſt *uſeful* or *hurtful* Subject: That you may prove the *former* to *Great Britain*, if you deſign to reſide among us, is the hearty Wiſh of,

SIR, &c.

London,
Nov. 11, 1721.

FINIS.